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ABSTRACT

This mini-unit seeks to fill the gap in textbooks that exists when teaching about modern France. Many textbooks end their coverage of France with the chapter on World War II. This unit offers high school students a unique introduction to France in the mid-1990s. The mini-unit includes a two-sided poster, teaching tips, and student pages. Student pages include: (1) "The Nation in Profile" outlining France's economic and social achievements since the 1950's; (2) "The Impact of Recent History identifying current political trends and events in France; and (3) "Current and Emerging Trends" examining evidence that the French culture includes elements of both tradition and change. Objectives are to: (1) introduce readers to a major topic within the study of contemporary France; (2) provide data and resources for launching research on this topic; and (3) suggest questions that might guide further research. (EH)

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Inside France
Three Missing Pages from Your Students' Textbooks

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INSIDE FRANCE

THREE MISSING PAGES FROM YOUR STUDENTS' TEXTBOOK

DEAR EDUCATOR...

The summer of 1998 cannot arrive too quickly for France's avid soccer fans. That's the year in which their nation will host the World Cup games. Some of your students may be among the billions of people, worldwide, who will watch the games on TV.

They'll surely glimpse France's new UFO-shaped stadium. And perhaps the TV producers will provide local-color shots. But what more will your students know about France? If they've taken a U.S. history class, they may remember the French fleet at Yorktown. Or perhaps they have a sense of French tradition from reading Hugo's masterful *Les Misérables*.

Yet how many will be familiar with France's recent history? How many know about its key role in forming the European Union, its scientists' research on the AIDS virus, or the current debate over the effects of *la mondialisation* (the globalization) of economic activity? Too many U.S. textbooks end their coverage of France with the chapter on World War II.

Inside France addresses this gap in coverage. Produced by Learning Enrichment, Inc. (LE) and underwritten by the Embassy of France, this mini-unit offers high school students a unique introduction to France in the mid-1990s.

HERE'S THE MINI-UNIT

The mini-unit includes a two-sided poster, this page of teaching tips, and three pages for students:

- "The Nation in Profile" outlines France's economic and social achievements since the 1950s.
- "The Impact of Recent History" identifies current political trends and events in France.
- "Current and Emerging Trends" examines evidence that the French culture includes elements of both tradition and change.

Each page has three objectives: (1) to introduce readers to a major topic within the study of contemporary France, (2) to provide data and a few resources for launching research on this topic, and (3) to suggest questions that might guide that research. (These questions can also be used to evaluate students' grasp of the page's contents.)

WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR USE

Where will this mini-unit work best? A course in world history would seem the obvious choice. But teachers of world regions and current issues will also find it valuable. Students in a U.S. history class can explore the similarities between issues facing France and those confronting their own nation. And teachers in the French language department may want to use the mini-unit, too.

After machine-copying the pages, you might try one of these strategies:

- Hand out a single page (perhaps the one on current trends) to stir interest, explore the format, and create readiness for the other two.
- Divide your class into small groups and assign a different page to each group for a discussion leading up to the preparation of a group report.
- Distribute all three pages as the basis for a class seminar on the broad question: ***"What are some of the challenges facing the French people today, and what are their best options for action?"***

AND A FOLLOW-UP TIP

It would be hard to overstate the importance of studying modern-day France. It is a leading democracy with a world-class economy and a trade volume that ranks fourth in the world. It is home to some of the finest artists, engineers, scientists, and writers in our time. France's influence is global—a concept that is dramatized by "The French Language in Today's World," the map on Side Two of the poster. The spread of France's language attests to the vital roles of French diplomats, business leaders, and Francophiles on every continent.

Opportunities for Americans to learn French views are increasing. Current issues of *Paris Match* and daily editions of *Le Monde* are available in many cities. Such programs as *Le Journal* and *Bouillon de Culture* are on public TV. If your students do not speak or read French, urge them to take a course or two and begin "tuning in" to people inside France today!

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

The LE team responsible for *Inside France* includes: Project Director, Clayton Westland; Editorial Director, Patricia Connuffe; and Design Director, Richard Leach.

LE would appreciate knowing how well this mini-unit meets your needs. Please take a few minutes to complete and return the enclosed business reply card (BRC). Your comments on the BRCs are always our best guidelines in ongoing efforts to serve you and your students. *Merci beaucoup!*

INSIDE

FRANCE

Current And Emerging Trends

UNE QUESTION...

Le fast-food, le blue-jean, le tie-break, le compact disc, le brainstorming....

"French conversation seems to be full of [such] words," says a recent issue of *The Economist*. No problem, say the many Americans who tour France or do business there: It's comforting to hear familiar terms far from home. But members of the Académie Française feel otherwise. Viewing the "Anglo-Americanization" of their language as a threat to French culture, they backed the passage of a recent law banning such terms as *le fast-food* from ads, broadcasts, and official documents.

THE CRITICAL ISSUE IS THIS

Are the French people so influenced by the "cultural exports" of other nations that their own heritage is at risk? Could references to *les blue-jeans* make young French citizens lose touch with their heritage? Would owning a Japanese car or enjoying a Russian-made movie make Parisians less "French?"

Oui! say critics. Look at some of the evidence: Jazz (American music with African roots) accounts for more than five percent of sales in French music stores. In France, the land that "invented" *cuisine*, shoppers buy microwave meals imported from England! And, on a more serious note: Immigrants to France today seem less inclined than earlier arrivals to exchange their cultural customs for French ways.

Non! say others. Cultural exchange is a major theme in history. By exporting products, fashions, and ideas, France itself has spread its culture to other societies for centuries. Those societies have not "lost" their cultures. And neither will the French people today.

BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE

Centuries ago, France earned a reputation as the cultural center of the Western world. Fine French wines and cheeses were sought by buyers on every continent. So were French silks, tapestries, and furniture. Leaders in other countries copied the manners of diplomats from Paris and studied French writers. Among these were Descartes, "father of modern philosophy," and Montesquieu, whose theory on the separation of powers influenced the framers of the U.S. Constitution.

Such leaders and achievements made French people increasingly proud to be "French." In the 1800s, France adopted a national system of education to ensure that each generation would learn its heritage. As French diplomats and business leaders increased their contacts with other societies, France's influence continued to spread.

FIELDS OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE TODAY

Today, cultural exchange involves more than borrowing from another people's arts and philosophy. It also includes the sharing of technical expertise. Just a few examples of how France is involved in such exchanges today:

- ***Cutting-edge research.*** In the 1980s, researchers in France's Pasteur Institute were among the first scientists to isolate the AIDS virus and to form a global team to fight it. Today, says the June 1994 *R&D Magazine*, the French city of Toulouse is on the must-see list for global researchers—for those tracking the latest work in biotechnology, electronics, aerospace, or computers.
- ***Construction expertise.*** French engineers and architects, known for excellent work, are often asked to tackle major projects in other nations. Recent examples: Kenya's Turkwell Dam, a huge source of hydroelectric power, and the Cairo metro, a subway system serving 500,000 Egyptians daily.
- ***Worldbeat.*** No, Worldbeat is not "French" music. But by the end of the 1980s France was the place where African, Arabic, and Latin sounds were mixing in an exciting new beat. According to *Vogue*, "Paris is the new mecca of international pop."

TOPPING THE CHARTS

Despite a law limiting the number of American TV series that may be aired in France, French viewers keep pushing such shows to the top of their charts. In February 1995 *Variety* reported that the "Columbo" detective series was "among the hottest...offerings" in French primetime. More recent U.S. exports at the top of French charts: a Stevie Wonder album, "Conversation Peace," and the movie "Forrest Gump."

"IS REALITY ALWAYS REALISTIC?"

Students in France, where a course in philosophy is mandatory, often debate such topics as the meaning of reality. How do teenagers rate the course?

"A waste of time," said a future economics major to one U.S. reporter.

Not so, argued a humanities student. "In philosophy, you can talk about everything: passion, religion, the state, law, violence, justice...."

—From *The New York Times*, July 7, 1994

THINK ABOUT IT SOME MORE

What do you think? Are today's cross-cultural exchanges a threat, or a benefit, to the French people's heritage? Summarize your views on this and other issues on this page. Then turn your summary into questions for further research. (The sources below may help you get started.) Try to imagine how these issues relate to life in America. For now, *Au revoir!*

Hutton, Ray. "France Takes a Stab at Le Grand Electric-Car Experiment." *Car and Driver*. October 1994.

Riding, Alan. "They Think, Therefore They Are Very French." *The New York Times*. July 7, 1994. Pg. A4.

Schuman, Joseph. "'Columbo' Leads the Way Through French Primetime." *Variety*. February 6, 1995.

Unsigned. "Comedie Française." *The Economist*. July 9, 1994.

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INSIDE

FRANCE

The Nation In Profile

THERE'S ALWAYS ONE HITCH

France has the world's fifth largest economy, the fourth biggest trade volume, and the fourth highest amount of gold reserves. Add the fact that it has one of Europe's lowest inflation rates, and what do you get? A profile of a very successful nation.

Still, there's one statistic the French people are impatient to change: their unemployment rate. For months, it has topped 12 percent—the highest among the world's top economies. French people wonder: Why can't their strong economy put more people to work?

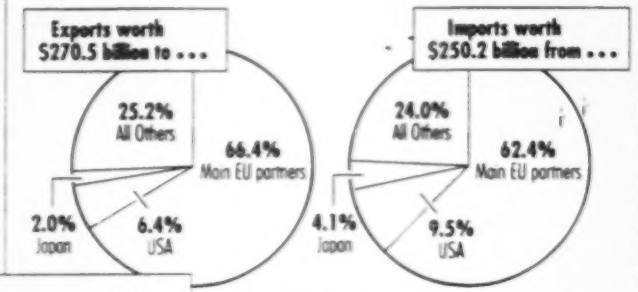
SIGNS OF ECONOMIC STRENGTH

The problem of unemployment has hit most industrial nations in the 1990s. But for France's 58 million people, that's small consolation. They've worked hard to avoid such problems.

After the devastation of World War II (1939–45), France's economy needed help to recover. Under a policy sometimes called *dirigisme*, the French government provided both planning and investment money. With this support, French business leaders and workers revived France's industries and created one of the world's richest economies. The nation's gross domestic product has topped $1 trillion since 1991. And services alone account for 56 percent of its exports. This great success story has several explanations.

- ***Rich resources.*** France has large forests, major deposits of bauxite (from which aluminum is obtained), and rich cropland. One of the world's top five wheat producers, France is among the few nations that can produce surplus crops for export.
- ***Excellent manufactures.*** French workers make their country one of the world's leading manufacturing centers. Top-notch engineers produce world-class cars, planes, and nuclear technology. (About 75 percent of France's electricity is generated in nuclear power plants.)
- ***Large service sector.*** Nearly 65 percent of French workers are employed in service industries ranging from banking to health care, to tourism. One third of those workers are employed by the national government and local communities.

FRANCE'S TRADING PARTNERS



France's main European Union (EU) trading partners are Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium-Luxembourg, Netherlands, and United Kingdom. Data for 1993.

FRANCE, IN THE RANKINGS

According to the 1994 UN *Human Development Report*, France provides the world's third largest amount of financial assistance to developing countries. It also ranks high in measurements of its own people's quality of life. Among the world's top 20 industrial countries, France is:

- **No. 2 in the percent of 19-year-olds in full-time education**
- **No. 3 in the number of doctors per 1,000 people**
- **No. 4 in closing the gap between women's and men's wages**

THE CRITICAL ISSUE IS THIS

Then why is France's unemployment rate so high—especially among young people, unskilled workers, and immigrants? The French people debated that issue during the 1995 election campaign:

- ***High taxes.*** Business leaders blame slow job growth on the high taxes they pay toward employee benefits. In early 1995, the legal minimum wage for a 39-hour week came to about $1,215 per month. But "the actual cost to the employer is 40 percent more," reported *The Economist*. The additional 40 percent takes the form of each company's contribution to its workers' benefits. One such benefit: After losing a job, unemployed people in France may receive nearly 60 percent of their former salaries.
- ***Removal of tariffs.*** French union leaders feel that unemployment is a result of the global trend toward free-trade agreements. Those who support free trade deny this. When a government reduces tariffs, they say, imports cost less, consumers buy more, and so new jobs are created (somewhere). But, reply the unions, free trade also fuels competition between domestic and foreign producers. When domestic producers lose, they shut down—or move to countries where labor is cheap.

THINK ABOUT IT SOME MORE

How to cope with the issues described on this page? Some argue that France should reduce the "benefits tax" that employees pay, and subsidize companies that hire the long-term unemployed. Others say the government should spend more francs on job training. What do you think? Sum up your understanding of France's economic situation. Then turn your summary into questions for research. (The sources below will help you get started.) And try to imagine how these problems relate to life in America. *Bonne chance!*

Stanger, Theodore, and Mabry, Marcus. "Liberte, Egalite, Mediocrite." *Newsweek*. June 20, 1994.

Tagliabue, John. "Airbus Has Its Eye on Half of the Global Market." *The New York Times*. April 13, 1995. Pg. D4.

Whitney, Craig R. "Unemployment the Key Issue in French Election." *The New York Times*. March 8, 1995. Pg. A3.

Unsigned. "French Unemployment." *The Economist*. April 1, 1995.

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INSIDE

FRANCE

The Impact of Recent History

WHICH PATH?

"We need a new approach, new methods," said Jacques Chirac to cheering crowds on the night of his recent election to the French Presidency. "We need to ask, before making a decision of any kind, is it good for jobs?"

Hovering near 12 percent, France's unemployment rate did contribute to the end of the liberal Socialists' long hold on the French Presidency. But unemployment is only one of the issues facing France today. As its leaders respond to unfolding challenges, they must also decide how many of France's traditional goals and policies they can maintain.

THE CRITICAL ISSUE IS THIS

It's hard to keep up with all the changes in today's world: The emergence of the Pacific region as an economic powerhouse, the turmoil in the Balkans, the swift computer flow of investment dollars from one country to another....

All such changes raise a critical question for France and other nations: What is the best way to protect one's national goals and priorities during a time of change? And what values should guide that decision?

In ancient times, France's rich soil and navigable rivers attracted waves of settlers—and invaders. Today France is a world power whose beautiful cities and cultural sites attract millions of tourists.

FRANCE'S GOVERNMENT, 1995

- **Name: French Republic, known as the "Fifth Republic"**
- **Head of state: President Jacques Chirac**
- **Head of government: Prime Minister Alain Juppé**
- **Parliament: Two houses, National Assembly and Senate**
- **Political parties: Many parties, ranging from the conservative Rally for the Republic to the liberal Socialists**

BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE

If there's one value the French people cherish, it's *la democratie*. In 1789, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* heralded the birth of French democracy. Proclaiming the equality of all people, it asserted their right to liberty, property, and security.

After World War II (1939–45), France and other nations realized that the pursuit of democracy demands more than protecting the rights of one's own citizens. Thus, France helped found the United Nations (for world peace), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (for freer world trade), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (for mutual protection).

In the 1950s, France supported another plan, one developed by two French citizens—Robert Schumann and Jean Monnet. Instead of going to war again over resources, said both men, France, Germany, and four neighbors should form a European Coal and Steel Community. The ECSC could then oversee the coal and steel industries in all member nations.

The ECSC paved the way for other groups, which eventually clustered in the European Community—now the European Union. The EU includes 15 nations with 370 million people, all of whom may shop, seek work, and invest money in any EU nation without paying taxes or fees to cross its borders.

STILL MORE CHANGE?

In the early 1990s, it seemed that EU members were headed toward political union and a common currency—the écu. But a number of fears slowed this movement. Some people worried that supporting a strong common currency might leave their own nation without easy credit (and thus with less ability to create new jobs). Escalation of the conflict in the Balkans troubled those who feared that a unified EU might involve all members in wars some did not want.

In France, domestic questions also loomed: Should the government cut business taxes, to free money for the creation of new jobs? Should it toughen its immigration policy, to preserve jobs for native-born French citizens?

THINK ABOUT IT SOME MORE

What do you think? What political or economic changes should France make? Which of its "old" values and alliances should it keep? Sum up your understanding of the issues on this page, then turn your summary into questions for research. (The sources below will help you get started.) And reflect on how these issues relate to life in America. *Merci!*

Coleman, Fred. "The Graying of a French Love Affair." *U.S. News & World Report*. May 22, 1995.

Drozdiak, William. "Chirac Wins Presidency of France." *The Washington Post*. May 8, 1995. Pg. A1.

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